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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [DJ](#) [MOPS](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: EAC: MILITARY CLASHES BETWEEN DJIBOUTI AND  
ERITREA--POSSIBLE STATE OF WAR?

REF: A. DJIBOUTI 472 B. DJIBOUTI 449 C. DJIBOUTI 428 D. DJIBOUTI 427 E. DJIBOUTI 424 (AND PREVIOUS)

Classified By: RSO ELLEN TANNOR for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) On Wednesday, June 11, Embassy Djibouti convened 2 meetings of the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) to discuss military clashes that occurred between Djibouti and Eritrea on the Ras Doumeras border on Tuesday, June 10. The meeting was led by Chargee d'Affaires Kathleen List and attended by RSO, ORA, CON, MGT, IPC, POL, PD, NCIS, USLO, US AID, and CCE.

12. (S) In the first EAC at 11:00 AM, GRPO gave background information leading to the current situation:

-On Tuesday June 10 at approximately 10:00AM an Eritrean soldier attempting to defect was shot at by fellow Eritrean soldiers. Eritrean soldiers demanded that all defected soldiers be returned to Eritrean custody or face attack.

-At around 1800 that same evening another high ranking Eritrean military person with key knowledge about Eritrean logistical plan and defense positions, attempted to defect. In return the Eritrean soldiers opened an exchange of small-arms fire with the Djiboutian military. The exchange lasted approximately 10 minutes and 18-25 soldiers were reported injured and 3 dead.

-During the clash the Djiboutian military launched helicopter attacks on the border. Eritrea received reinforcements from the sea side while the Djiboutians received reinforcement from land.

-Djibouti has reportedly turned over 10 defectors to the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees and approximately 80 prisoners of war remain in Djibouti's custody in an undisclosed location.

-GRPO meetings with National Security Service (NSS) indicated that a 'State of War' with Eritrea is to be declared shortly, and also a communique to the diplomatic corp. outlining the current state of affairs is to be released today by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

-Currently the French, who have a defense treaty with Djibouti, is providing material and logistical support, but no troop support as of yet. Djibouti has increased its anti-aircraft force and is very cognizant of the vulnerabilities faced by the port in light of an attack.

-Djibouti dismissed the Eritrean Ambassador to Djibouti from country and is braced for full-scale fighting.

13. (C) NCIS discussed port security and reported that at 8:30AM there was no increase in security at the port. On Tuesday there was speculation that the port level would be raised from level 1 to level 2 however there was a stand-down to that option until further notice. Raising the threat level from level 1 to 2 would require that at least 50% of the vehicles entering the port must be inspected. NCIS noted that as the port is a primary revenue source for the Government of Djibouti, not raising the threat level at the port may be due to political implications associated with the cost of insurance which would adversely and directly affect revenue.

14. (C) RSO reviewed the current environment in the city and

noted that we would continue to see high levels of law enforcement throughout the city as have been witnessed in the last several weeks. However because the National Police, the largest law enforcement entity, also serve as reinforcement and a second line of defense for the Djiboutian military at the northern border, host government capabilities are getting stretched thin. RSO advised that given the state of uncertainty at the northern border, all trips planned for north of Tadjoura will be off limits unless deemed mission essential. Subsequent trips to Tadjoura and Obock in the next few weeks by Embassy staff have been canceled. RSO advised that while life in the capital will resume as normal, rampant rumors and frenzy in Djibouti will travel faster than the facts due to a lack a reliable sources to obtain accurate information. RSO warned that traffic patterns near the French hospital (approx. 3 miles from the Embassy) has already caused minor disruptions and will continue to while the injured and dead continue to arrive.

15. (C) EAC concurred to send a warden message to American Citizens informing them of military fighting and advising all American citizens to avoid travel to northern Djibouti until further notice.

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16. (C) At the second EAC meeting at 1700, Chargee reviewed a communique received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which did not mention a declaration of war on Eritrea, but rather indicated that Djibouti would use all means to protect itself, but opening the door to further diplomatic efforts. EAC agreed that at the current time, it is not necessary to halt Embassy visitors or major operations until there is more time to assess the situation and how it could impact or impede the mission. The EAC will continue to monitor, assess and make decisions as necessary. However Post is braced for further military clashes.

17. (C) RSO reviewed all current trips wires and the EAC concurred that we have not met or exceeded the threshold of any trip wire. A security meeting with the force protection team at Camp Lemonier indicated only minor changes to their liberty policy and no new restrictions on Camp personnel were put in place. All Embassy security assets including the National Police Special Brigade, who protect the mission, have been placed on high alert.

18. (C) GSO/MGT/RSO reviewed Post's current emergency assets and advised that each of the residences' water tank has been topped off--reaching 3000 liters of water, there are 90 liters of water in the distillers, generators have been filled and can last 24-hours to 4 days depending on usage. RSO has supplied each residence with a case of water and a case of meals ready to eat (MRE) that can last a household 2-3 days depending on size. The various Embassy safe havens and the off-site safe haven are fully equipped with emergency food, water and supplies and all radios have been tested.

19. (C) USAID noted that the Ministry of Health contacted her directly requesting 30 body bags. USAID referred the request to USLO who was able to fulfill the request with the assistance of US Naval Base, Camp Lemonier.

110. (C) RSO COMMENT: While life in Djibouti is not the same today as it was yesterday due to the conflict, by and large most aspects of life in the capital has and will continue on as normal. The capital is abuzz with various reports and stories of military clashes at the border. Host Government engages in a fruitful dialogue with Chargee d'Affaires and many American officers at Post and is forthright with information and reports within country. Host Government continues to maintain peace, order and stability in the city. RSO does not prescribe putting any short fixes to a long-term problem. Thus further monitoring and assessment is required. However, what is almost certain is that military clashes of some type, on some level are fully expected. Post is standing watch this evening and will review and assess first light.

11. (SBU) POC for this report is RSO Ellen Tannor, Tannorek@state.sgov.gov. (253) 35-39-95 ext. 2307

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